AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification by inserting the following paragraphs after paragraph [0037]:

[0038] In accordance with another aspect of the invention, an exemplary method for facilitating transactions among consumers and providers of travel services comprises the steps of receiving, by an independent technology provider, information regarding available travel-related services; receiving, by the host, a request from an agent; retrieving, by the host, information be displayed from the technology provider; presenting one or more displays incorporating the retrieved information to an agent; and facilitating a transaction between the consumer and the provider of travel-related services.

[0039] In an exemplary embodiment, the step of facilitating the transaction among the consumer and are or more providers of travel-related services may be performed by the host using a dedicated server operating a booking engine and may comprise the steps of receiving, from an agent, an order or other request configured for reserving a service in the name of or otherwise on behalf of a consumer; facilitating updating of a database to reflect the reservation of the service; facilitating a reduction of an inventory, maintained on a database, of available services; sending to the agent (or other requesting party, e.g., the consumer) information or indicia sufficient to enable the end-user to utilize the service; receiving a payment from or on behalf of the agent; and effecting the distribution of user fees, incentives, commissions, and the like, among various parties such as the agent, the service provider(s) and the consumer. In an exemplary embodiment, the distribution of fees may comprise payment, from the agent to the carrier, of a fee for the service; payment, from the carrier to the host, of a commission for facilitating the transaction; and payment, to one or more of the technology provider(s), agent(s),

and the booking engine (e.g., the host), of fees to settle the transaction.

[0040] In an exemplary embodiment the step of retrieving information from the technology provider may comprise retrieving and/or more displays from the technology providers, specifying or otherwise defining information or content, and may also comprise selecting one or more display formats. Moreover, the step of presenting one or more displays may comprise excluding information that has been defined or selected for exclusion.

[0041] FIG. 5 illustrates a schematic diagram of a system 500 for facilitating transactions among consumers 540 and providers of travel-related services 560 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. System 500 comprises a technology provider 520 and a host 510. Technology provider 520 is configured to communicate with host 510, and host 510 is configured to communicate with an agent 530 and one or more providers of 560 travel-related services.

[0042] Technology provider 520 is configured for facilitating the receipt, maintenance and provision of information regarding available travel-related services 560. Technology provider 520 may be configured to obtain and maintain its data in any convenient manner. For example, it may periodically "ping" remote servers, receive or retrieve batch data at predetermined intervals, operate in an interrupt mode to receive significant updates, maintain communication links with one or more service providers 560 to facilitate real time updates, or the like.

[0043] In accordance with a preferred embodiment, technology provider 520 may be configured to operate independently from any particular provider of travel-related services 560, i.e., Technology provider 520 is not affiliated with (e.g., ownership by, control by, operation by,

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marketed by, under common control with) any particular carrier or other travel-related service provider. Alternatively, technology provider 520 may be affiliated with one or more service providers and/or agents, and may be configured to prioritize or exhibit preferences for one or more service providers according to predetermined criteria. Regardless of whether technology provider 520 is affiliated with any service providers or agents, technology provider 520 may be configured to implement any desired preference schedules, or to implement no preferences at all.

[0044] In operation, host 510 is in communication with technology provider 520, agent 530, and one or more providers of travel-related services 560. Host 510 is also configured for receiving a request 532 from agent 530, for retrieving one or more displays 512 (or data to be displayed) from technology provider 520 in response to the request 532, for presenting one or more of those displays 512 to the agent 530, and for facilitating a transaction between the consumer 540 and the provider of travel-related services 560.